365/990

background notes

Botswana

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

October 1990

Official Name: Republic of Botswana

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 600,372 sq. km. (224,710 sq. mi.), about the size of Texas. **Cities:** *Capital*—Gaborone (pronounced Ha-bo-ro-neh, pop. 120,000). *Other towns*—Francistown (55,000), Selebi-Phikwe (50,000), Lobatse (26,000), Palapye (17,000), Jwaneng (13,900), Tlokweng (11,800). **Terrain:** Desert and savanna. **Climate:** Mostly arid and subtropical.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective* — Motswana (sing.), Batswana (pl.). **Population** (1989 est.): 1,255,700. **Annual growth rate:** 3.6%. **Ethnic groups:** Tswana 55%–60%; Kalanga 25%–30%; Kgalagadi, Yei, Herero, Mbukushu, Basarwa ("Bushmen"), Khoi (Hottentots), whites (about 1%), others 10%. **Religions:** Indigenous beliefs 50%, Christianity 50%. **Languages:** English (official), Setswana. **Education:** *Attendance* (primary school adjusted)—93%. *Adult literacy* (1988 est.): 84% (ages 15 to 70). **Health:** *Infant mortality rate* (1983–88): 63/1,000. *Life expectancy* (1988): 59 yrs. **Work force** (formal sector, 1988): 187,000.

Government

Type: Republic, parliamentary democracy. **Constitution:** March 1965. **Independence:** September 30, 1966.

Branches: *Executive*—president (chief of state and head of government),cabinet. *Legislative*—unicameral National Assembly. House of Chiefs (second House with advisory powers only). *Judicial*—High Court, Court of Appeal, local and customary courts.

Administrative subdivisions: Five town councils and 10 district councils. Central District, seat at Serowe; Chobe District Kasane; Ghanzi District, Ghanzi; Kgalagadi District, Tsabong; Kgatleng District, Mochudi; Kweneng District, Molepolole; Northeast District, Francistown; Southeast District, Gaborone; Southern District, Kanye; and Northwest District, Maun.

Political parties: Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana National Front (BNF), Botswana Independence Party (BIP), Botswana Peoples Party (BPP), Botswana Progressive Union (BPU), Botswana Freedom Party (BFP), Botswana Labor Party (BLP). **Suffrage:** Universal adult.

National budget (FY 1989–90): $503.5 million. *Development expenditures*—$408.6 million, under half of which is financed by international donors.

Defense and police forces FY 1989–90): $54.1 million, about 10.8% of the budget.

Flag: Blue field divided by horizontal black band with narrow white stripe on either side. The colors represent the blue sky and blue water of the Okavango Delta; the black and white symbolize the nonracial composition of the society.

Economy

GDP (1988–89 est.): $2.023 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1988–89): 13%. **Per capita GDP** (1989): $1,611.

Natural resources: Diamonds, copper, nickel, salt, gold, soda ash, potash, coal.

Agriculture (about 3.5% of GDP): *Products*—livestock, sorghum, corn, millet, cowpeas, beans.

Industry: *Types*—mining (45% of 1988 GDP): diamonds, copper, nickel, coal, processed food, frozen beef, textile, tourism.

Trade (1988): *Exports*—$1,297.2 million (f.o.b.): diamonds, nickel, copper, meat products, hides and skins, textiles. *Partners*—Switzerland, South Africa, Zimbabwe, UK, other European countries. *Imports*—$978.3 million (c.i.f.): machinery, transport equipment, manufactured goods, food, chemicals, minerals, fuels. *Major suppliers*—South Africa, Zimbabwe, US, UK, other EEC countries.

Economic aid received: Total from all sources—avg. $220 million per year. *US aid* (1965–89)—$289 million, avg. $12 million per year.

Membership in International Organizations

UN and most of its specialized agencies, Organization of African Unity (OAU), Commonwealth, Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), Front Line States, Nonaligned Movement, Lome Convention (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific/European Economic Community).

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READEX FICHE best copy available

Botswana
International boundary
District boundary
National capital
District capital
Railroad
Road
0 50 100 Kilometers
0 50 100 Miles
ZAMBIA
ANGOLA
Namibia
ZIMBABWE
SOUTH AFRICA
CHOBE
NGAMILAND
GHANZI
KWENENG
KGALAGADI
CENTRAL
SOUTHERN
NORTH EAST
SOUTH EAST
Caprivi Zipfel (Caprivi Strip)
Okavango Swamps
Makgadikgadi (salt pans)
Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

PEOPLE

Most Batswana live in the eastern part of the country, primarily in villages. Only seven towns have populations of more than 10,000, although several large, traditional villages (including Kanye and Serowe, home of the country's first president, Sir Seretse Khama) have more than 30,000 people.

An estimated 40,000 Batswana work in neighboring African countries, mainly in the Republic of South Africa. The 1981 census estimated the nomadic population at about 10,000. Some 55%–60% of the country's population is made up of the Tswana tribe (Batswana), which is divided into eight subgroups: Bamangwato, Bakwena, Batawana, Bangwaketse, Bakgatla, Bamalete, Barolong, and Batlokwa. The Kalanga, Herero, Bushmen (Basarwa), Yei, and Kgalagadi are minorities. In addition, there are about 5,500 British citizens resident in Botswana and about 30,000 people of other nationalities.

Gaborone—named for a 19th-century Batlokwa chief from the village of Gaborone-a-Matlapeng. Shopping mall with President Hotel and Orapa House in background.

HISTORY

By the 1700s, the ancestors of today's African population were established either as self-sufficient herders and farmers or as hunters and gatherers in the region that is now Botswana. First contact with Europeans came through missionaries in the early 19th century, when the territory was torn by intertribal warfare. In the last quarter of the century, hostilities broke out between the Batswana and the Afrikaners from South Africa (Transvaal). Following appeals by the Batswana for assistance, the British Government in 1885 proclaimed "Bechuanaland" to be under British protection. The southern part of the territory was first constituted as a crown colony, later became part of the Cape Colony, and is now part of the Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa. The northern part, known as the "Bechuanaland Protectorate" (now Botswana) remained under British control.

In 1909, despite South African pressure, inhabitants of Bechuanaland, Basutoland (now Lesotho), and Swaziland demanded and received British agreement that they not be included in the proposed Union of South Africa.

As British central authority gradually expanded, it was accompanied by a steady evolution of local tribal government. In 1920, the central authority established two advisory councils representing the African and European inhabitants. In 1934, proclamations were issued that regularized the positions and powers of the chiefs and defined the constitution and functions of the native courts under the native authority system that had evolved in other British dependencies. Tribal treasuries were created in 1938. In 1951, a Joint Advisory Council was formed, consisting of official and nonofficial European and African members. The May 2, 1961, constitution established a Legislative Council, which held its first session at Lobatse on June 21, 1961.

In June 1964, the British Government accepted proposals for a form of self-government for Botswana that would lead to independence. These proposals had been agreed upon unanimously during discussions in Botswana between the British Commissioner and representatives of the chiefs, political parties, and important minority communities.

The seat of the government was moved from Mafeking, South Africa, to the new capital at Gaborone in February 1965. The new constitution became effective in March 1965, and general elections were held. Botswana became independent on September 30, 1966.

GOVERNMENT

Under the 1965 constitution, executive power in Botswana is vested in the president, chosen in a national election for a 5-year term. The president's cabinet, selected from the National Assembly, consists of a vice president and an unspecified number of ministers. The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 38 seats, of which 34 are directly elected, and the remainder appointed.

General elections must be held at least every 5 years. Botswana is divided into 34 single-member constituencies with roughly equal population per constituency. A voters roll, based on universal adult suffrage, is maintained for each constituency. The constitution also provides for a House of Chiefs, which serves as an advisory body to the

Botswana has recently become the largest producer of diamonds in the world: over 12.9 million carats were produced in 1984. These diamonds are some of the first discovered in Botswana.

government. The chiefs of the eight principal subgroups of the Batswana tribe are permanent ex-officio members, and four other members are elected by the subchiefs in the Chobe, North East, Ghanzi, and Kgalagadi Districts. The National Assembly may not proceed with any bill relating to matters of tribal concern unless a draft has been referred to the House of Chiefs.

Botswana's High Court is the trial court, with general civil and criminal jurisdiction. Judges are appointed by the president and may be removed only for cause and after a hearing. Chiefs and headmen preside over customary courts (called "kgotla") constituted according to local custom for enforcing traditional law. The constitution contains a code of fundamental human rights, enforced by the courts.

Local government is administered by 10 district councils and 4 town councils. Executive authority is vested in the district commissioner, appointed by the central government and assisted by the elected and specially nominated district councillors and district development committees.

Principal Government Officials

President—Quett K. J. Masire
Vice President and Minister of Local Government and Lands—Peter S. Mmusi

Other Ministers
Presidential Affairs and Public Administration—Lt. Gen. Mompati Merafhe
External Affairs—Gaositwe Chiepe

Ambassador to the United States—B. K. Sebele
Ambassador to the United Nations—L. J. M. J. Legwaila

Botswana maintains an embassy in the United States at 3400 International Drive, NW., Suite 7M, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–244–4990). Botswana's mission to the United Nations is at 866 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Botswana has one of the few flourishing, multiparty constitutional democracies in Africa. The openness of the country's political system compares favorably with mature democracies elsewhere and has contributed to Botswana's remarkable stability and economic growth. Although a government-owned newspaper and broadcasting operation dominate the media, there is an independent press, and foreign publications are readily available. During its sixth national election in 1989, candidates from two of the country's eight political parties won election to the National Assembly. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) holds 31 of the 34 parliamentary seats. However, the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) made significant gains in town council seats.

Botswana has one of the best human rights records in the world. The country's small white minority and other minorities participate freely in the political process. The roots of the country's democracy go back to Tswana traditions, such as the "kgotla," or village council, in which the powers of traditional leaders were limited by custom and law. Currently, political debate in Botswana often centers on development and on regional economic and political issues. Although they find the policy of apartheid repugnant and support efforts to abolish it, the pragmatic Batswana maintain necessary economic ties with South Africa. No restrictions exist on the free movement of

goods or people between the two countries, and Botswana is a member of the Southern Africa Customs Union. Recognizing Botswana's national security interests, the Batswana refuse to allow their territory to be used as a staging area for violent attacks on other countries of the region.

ECONOMY

Since independence in 1966, Botswana's economy has grown at an 8%–14% rate. This growth has been almost exclusively fueled by mining, particularly of diamonds. Since the early 1980s, the country has become the world's largest producer of quality diamonds. Three large diamond mines are located in Botswana; all opened since independence. The proceeds of the diamond industry, considerable international grant and loan aid, and the prudent fiscal policies and wise economic management of the past 20 years have placed Botswana in an extremely strong financial position. Recently, the government has had consistent budget surpluses and, as of December 1989, almost $2.8 billion in foreign exchange reserves.

Mining

Two large mining companies, Debeers Botswana Mining (Debswana) and Bamangwato Concession, Ltd. (BCL), both partly government owned, operate mining facilities in the eastern and central regions of the country. Botswana produced a total of 15.2 million carats of diamonds from the three Debswana mines in 1988. BCL, which operated a copper-nickel mine at Selebi-Phikwe, produced 57,500 tons of semi-refined copper-nickel ore for export in 1988. In addition, Botswana's major coal mine at Morupule had a 1988 output of 612,000 tons. The Sua Pan soda ash project, which is expected to produce 300,000 tons of soda ash as well as 650,000 tons of salt yearly, will begin operation in mid-1991. The Francistown area has several small gold mines in operation.

Petroleum, coal, and natural gas deposits are currently being studied for future exploitation.

Agriculture

Three-quarters of Botswana's people live in rural areas and are largely dependent on subsistence and livestock farming. Cattle raising is historically a dominant aspect in Botswana's economy and social structure. Botswana's cattle herd has grown slowly in recent years to about 2.5 million head, but it still has not reached the pre-1980s drought level of almost 3 million. The government-owned Botswana Meat Commission, located in Lobatse, operates the largest abattoir in Africa and is the continent's largest meat export company. The Commission also operates smaller abatoirs in Francistown and Maun. Botswana exported about $61 million of beef and beef products in 1988, mostly to Europe and South Africa. Farming, although marginal in the near-desert climate, continues to be a major means of employment. To increase food production, the government promotes dry-land and irrigation farming.

Private-Sector Development and Foreign Investment

The government currently seeks to diversify Botswana's economy to achieve a better balanced and sustainable future growth. Emphasis is on private-sector development and foreign investment, considered important primarily for the much-needed managerial and technical expertise that accompanies such investment. Two areas receiving consideration are manufacturing and tourism. Extensive national parks and wildlife areas, covering more than 17% of Botswana's land area, provide the potential for considerable tourism development.

US investment in Botswana, though still relatively minor, is growing steadily. In 1987, two American companies, Heinz and Colgate-Palmolive, agreed to establish plants there. Since then, Phelps-Dodge and Interkiln Corp., of Houston, Texas, have initiated investments in the country.

Transportation and Communications

Botswana has about 2,000 kilometers (1,200 mi.) of paved roads, 1,266 kilometers (785 mi.) of engineered gravel roads, and 4,875 kilometers (3,022 mi.) of earth-and-sand roads. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the paving of the Nata-Kazungula road, completed in 1984, linking the country's main highway with Zambia. Botswana's one rail line (714 kilometers—443 mi.) links the major population centers to Zimbabwe and South Africa, although a new 173 kilometer (104 mi.) line between Francistown and the Sua Pan soda ash project is expected to be completed in April 1991. Botswana depends on South Africa for more than 85% of its imports (which either come from South Africa or pass through South African ports) and for beef and copper-nickel ore exports. Botswana has nine permanent-surface airfields, two with runways more than 2,000 meters (6,600 ft.). Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Gaborone has connections to all southern African countries, including South Africa, as well as direct flights to Nairobi, London, and Paris.

Botswana instituted international direct-dialing telephone service for urban areas in late 1986. Automatic direct-dial access gradually is being extended to more remote rural areas.

DEFENSE

According to Botswana's constitution as amended in 1975, the president is the commander in chief of the Botswana Defense Force (BDF). The BDF was formed in 1977, largely in response to the

Southern African Customs Union (SACU)

Based on history and geography, Botswana long has had strong economic ties with South Africa. The Southern African Customs Union, which includes Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa, dates from the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. According to the terms of this agreement, South Africa levies and collects most of the customs, sales, and excise duties for the four countries, paying out a share of the collections to each, based on each country's level of imports. Imports from outside the customs area are subject to common tariff rates and regulations.

The customs agreement was renegotiated in 1969, and Botswana's share of the revenue increased from $1.7 million in 1968 to almost $141 million in 1988–89, accounting for some 13% of the government's revenues. In 1976, Botswana began to issue its own currency, the pula, which is fully convertible. It is evaluated against a basket of currencies that is heavily weighted to the South African rand but recently has been valued 30% above the rand.

Travel Notes

Customs: American citizens do not need visas to enter Botswana. They may stay for up to 90 days without a residence permit.

Health: Botswana's climate is basically healthful, and tapwater is potable in the major towns. Seek advice before swimming in lakes or rivers, in which bilharzia (causing schistosomiasis) is prevalent. Hepatitis is a problem in urban areas.

Transportation: Botswana is served by air from Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya by Kenya Air and Air Botswana; London, England by British Airways; Paris, France by UTA; Lusaka, Zambia, and Harare, Zimbabwe, by Air Botswana, Air\Zimbabwe, Royal Swazi Airlines, and Zambia Airways. Rental cars are available in Gaborone and other major towns. Traffic moves on the left.

Tourist attractions: Roughly 16% of the land has been designated as national parks or game reserves, and Botswana's Chobe National Park and Moremi Wildlife Reserve are considered superb in terms of wildlife and setting. The Okavango Delta also is a major tourist area. Hotel facilities are comfortable in all major centers.

National holidays: Business establishments and the US Embassy may be closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	January 2
Good Friday	varies
Easter Monday	varies
Ascension Thursday	varies
President's Day	July 16
Botswana Day	September 30
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26

Rhodesian conflict, which was affecting Botswana. It currently has about 5,000 members of whom 280 serve in the Air Wing.

Facing a threat of overt or covert military raids from South Africa directed against believed ANC targets, Botswana has embarked on modest modernization and expansion of the BDF, including acquisition of air defense and anti-tank weapons, as well as a small number of jet fighters, transport aircraft, and helicopters. The United States has provided more than $35 million in military assistance, and about 250 BDF soldiers and officers have received military training in the United States.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Botswana is opposed to South Africa's policy of apartheid and has no formal diplomatic relations with that country. It does not recognize the independence of so-called homelands, including its neighbor Bophuthatswana, which is populated by the same ethnic Tswana group as Botswana. In part because of its geographic location and reliance on South African transportation systems and goods, which will continue with a post-apartheid South Africa, Botswana, nevertheless, maintains a pragmatic working relationship and close economic ties with South Africa. This includes police contacts in criminal matters and day-to-day customs union and other economic activities. Substantial foreign investment in Botswana comes from South Africa, a situation also dictated by geography and unlikely to change markedly in the near future.

Botswana has formal diplomatic relations with most African countries and with many West and East European nations and Arab countries. Most ambassadors accredited to Botswana reside in Harare or Lusaka, with only 12 diplomatic missions maintaining a full-time presence in Gaborone, including the United States, Soviet Union, People's Republic of China (PRC), Poland, United Kingdom, and several other West European nations. Multilateral and bilateral aid donors include the United States, the European Community (EC) and individual EC member states, the Nordic states, multilateral development banks, and the PRC.

Currently, Botswana maintains eight diplomatic missions abroad. It is a member of numerous international organizations, including the United Nations and various UN-related organizations, the Organization of African Unity, the front-line states, and of SADCC. Botswana has very good relations with other southern African countries and fully supports regional efforts at economic integration and political independence. It generally follows a nonaligned policy in international forums, voting with its African colleagues on most issues.

US-BOTSWANA RELATIONS

The United States supports Botswana's progressive political, economic, and social development as a nonracial, democratic, independent nation, and recognizes it as an important force for stability in the turbulent southern African region. The United States operates a Peace Corps program, (more than 200 volunteers), which provides development assistance and food aid, and has an investment guarantee agreement with the Botswana government. The United States also seeks to encourage private-sector growth in Botswana and to expand the role of American investment and trade in Botswana's program of economic development.

Total US assistance from FY 1965 to FY 1989 was some $289 million, or an average of about $12 million annually. In FY 1988, combined US assistance from all sources was $28.2 million, and the amount for FY 1989 for all donors was $287.7 million. US assistance has emphasized education, including primary and secondary school curriculum development, and funding of training and education both in Botswana and other countries. Since 1965, more than 800 Batswana have completed US-funded studies at the

Southern African Development Coordination Conference

Gaborone houses the Executive Secretariat of SADCC, an organization of 10 southern African nations formed in 1980 to accelerate regional economic growth and reduce members' economic dependence on South Africa. Because the entire region is highly dependent on South Africa's transportation network for import and export routes, the main focus of SADCC efforts thus far has been on development of alternative shorter and cheaper transportation routes. Although its geographic location makes this effort of limited relevance to Botswana, it has fully supported SADCC programs.

The Batswana accept the interdependence of the region and the continued importance of South Africa as its largest and richest state and fully intend to continue economic ties with that nation. Nevertheless, they also fully support efforts to reduce South Africa's regional domination.

undergraduate or graduate level in the United States, and many more have been to the United States for shorter term training programs. The United States also maintains an active Fulbright program with Botswana, in which four or five American Fulbright Scholars spend an academic year at the University of Botswana. Several Batswana generally come to the United States on Fulbright or other academic grants each year.

The United States operates a small Voice of America (VOA) relay station at Selebi-Phikwe, near Francistown, which is being expanded to improve the quality of VOA transmissions in southern Africa. It is the only such facility in southern or eastern Africa.

Principal US Officials

Ambassador—David Passage
Deputy Chief of Mission—Jimmy Kolker
AID Mission Director—vacant
Public Affairs Officer—Alice LeMaistre
Peace Corps Director—Lloyd O. Pierson

The address of the US Embassy in Botswana is Embassy Drive, P.O. Box 90, Gaborone, Botswana (tel. 353982; fax 356947; telex 2554 BD); USAID address is Barclays House, 3rd floor, Khama Crescent, P.O.Box 2427, Gaborone; USIS, P.O. Box 90, Gaborone; VOA, Botswana Relay Station, Private Bag 38, Selebi-Phikwe; Peace Corps, 133 Independence Ave., P.O. Box 93, Gaborone. The long distance telephone country code for Botswana is 267. ■

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